

PAF NEWS

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Friends of the Polperro Arts Foundation

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2022. This issue offers a taste of the work of three of our artists, including our newest guest Rachel, together with their own notes about what motivates them and the techniques they use; and we continue our look back over the long, fascinating history of art in Polperro.

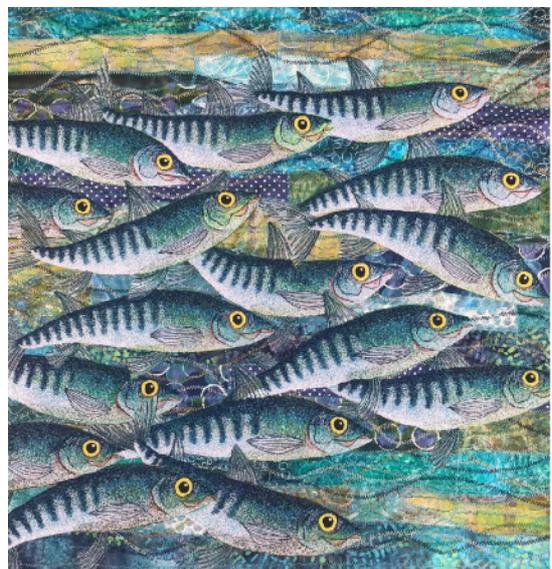
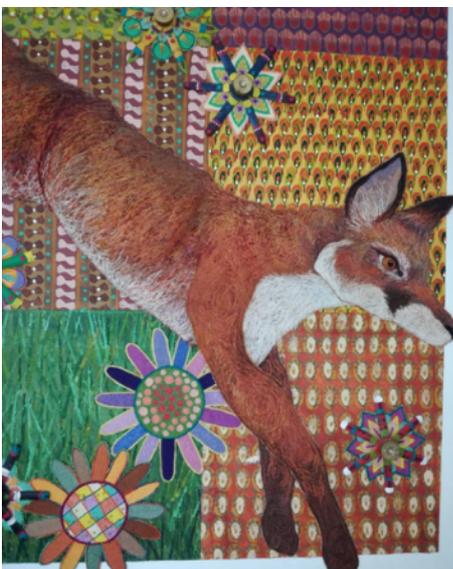
Rachel Brown

Working in mixed media, my artwork is created using machine and hand embroidery, fabric collage and hand print.

Fish and birds often feature in my pieces and the images are built up from hundreds of stitches, forming layers of colour and texture.

The fish pictures, although two-dimensional, convey a sense of movement by using shimmering fabrics and metallic threads. In other pieces like birds, I use heavy stitching to manipulate the fabrics giving a 3D sculptural appearance. I also use this technique to form faces and figures. Combined with my love of colour and pattern, these pieces are vibrant and fun. Sometimes patterns are abstract or inspired by feathers, fish scales and repetitive tile and carpet designs.

I like to recycle materials whenever possible and also create mosaics using broken china.



Charles Summers

I work in three areas: oil paintings, collage and fans. Many of my oil paintings represent the landscapes, trees, mosses and ferns of Cornwall's interior, while others are re-interpretations of the seventeenth Dutch flower paintings which tell a story of luxury, expensive flowers that last but a short time, a metaphor for life, all that is mortal passes away. I always add in a few dead leaves and flowers as a reminder of the fragility and brevity of life. I have also painted the landscapes of my childhood in South America and Jamaica.

The collage works on more or less the same principle. The layers of paint, paper and metallic foils, built up and then polished down, mimics the structure of the planet, changed and metamorphosed by time. I add in the colour green as a reminder that life is cyclical, there is always renewal, giving hope for the future.

The fans are an attempt to transform a useful object into a work of art, not just a decorative item, so that people can own an inexpensive piece of work that is also functional.

In the past I painted many detailed botanical pieces such as the flowers shown here on the left, for which I won two gold medals from The Royal Horticultural Society. In 1985/6 I was commissioned to paint the flowers in Agatha Christie's garden at Greenway beside the river Dart in Devon, for her son-in-law's 70th birthday. I spent six wonderful months with the family on a daily basis, and I believe my botanical paintings are still on display there.



Babs Taylor

I get my inspiration from the open spaces that surround the coast path. Cornwall is full of vivid colour, the sea is ever present and the weather is often wild and exhilarating.

I work in pastel and acrylic ink, layering them to create texture and pattern. The paper I use is thick, heavy and textured which gives more depth to the work.

Occasionally I tear away small sections of the paper to create greater depth and texture. This can be seen in the work 'Cornish Winter'.

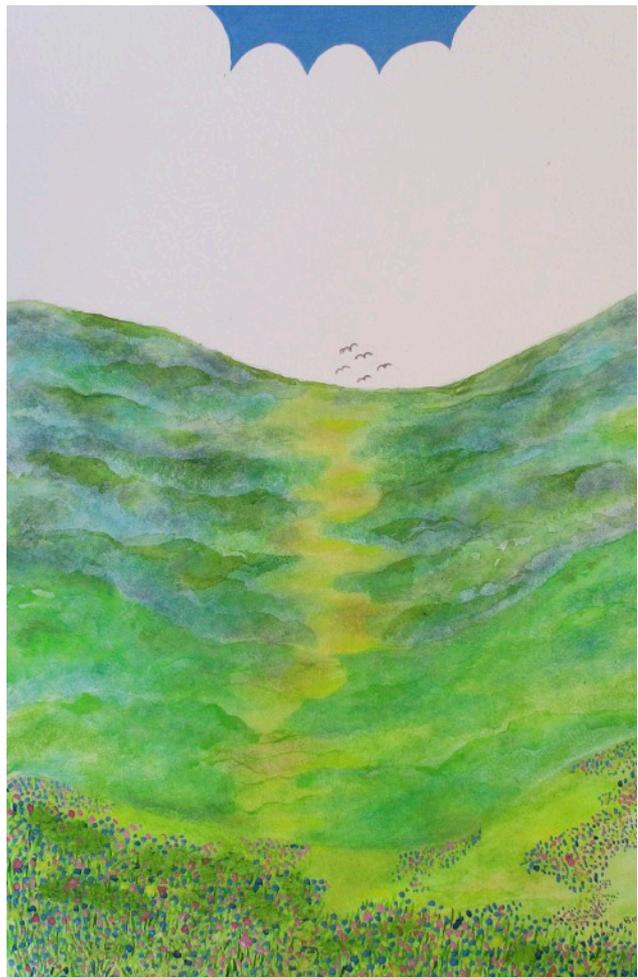
All my work is professionally mounted and framed.



Cornish winter



Sea, sand and flowers



Sea path

Polperro's Art History - the war years

More notes from David Tovey's book, Polperro – Cornwall's Forgotten Art Centre (2021)

After beginning to thrive as a genuine artists' centre prior to 1914 the war brought a steep decline in the world of art generally, and in Polperro in particular. The work of the local art schools dwindled as did the numbers of visiting artists. Nevertheless, resident artists Herbert Butler and John Robertson Reid continued to work, and three pieces stand out for depicting scenes directly related to the war.

Butler's *The Homecoming* shows a young soldier on leave with his family, apparently modelled by members of the Puckey family (local people may notice some resemblances). Butler also produced a pencil sketch of the dedication of the war memorial at Downend Point on the coastal footpath leading to Talland. The most dramatic war-related painting was by Reid showing men in three small boats trying to capture a German mine.



Herbert Butler, The Homecoming

The village was not completely without visiting artists and we are introduced or re-introduced to Elizabeth Vawdrey, Hampden Alfred Minton, Sydney Carter and, perhaps the most interesting, Claude Hamilton Rowbotham who was notable for inventing a way of reproducing coloured etchings.

However David suggests that the period from 1914 to 1920 was more remarkable for visiting writers than for artists. In 1912 Hugh Walpole, the widely travelled and prolific novelist, had taken a cottage on The Warren, The Cobbles, with an annual rent agreement and often retreated to it from his otherwise

hectic life in London and overseas until his final visit to Polperro in 1921. By then, while working on some of his best known novels he had become deeply involved in village life which he wrote about affectionately in some of his short stories.

Walpole's connections brought a number of well-known figures to Polperro including Philip Streatfield, the bohemian artist, who brought his prodigy the young Noel Coward; the soldier-poet Sydney



John Robertson Reid, Capturing a German mine



Herbert Butler, the service of dedication Polperro's war memorial

Lower, who wrote under the name of Sydney Oswald also visited and worked in Polperro during this period; Harold Nicholson, the politician, diplomat and novelist, visited briefly in 1918 with his wife Vita Sackville-West.

Arthur Quiller-Couch is normally associated with Fowey where he lived for most of his life and is widely commemorated; but 'Q' clearly retained childhood memories from visiting his grandfather Jonathan Couch's house in Lansallos Street. His novel 'Nicky-Nan, Reservist' appears to be

set in Polperro and includes some observations about locals being priced out of the housing market and the decline of fish stocks that still resonate today.

David Tovey rounds out the first volume of his book with three pages of reminiscences from the Liskeard-based artist John Kerkin Broad, a member of the Stanhope Forbes school of artists based in Newlyn and once described as "the grand old man of art in East Cornwall". Broad recorded some interesting observations on the nature of the village and village life at the time, and many of the artists associated with it.

While in some respects this was a quiet period in the history of art in Polperro, David argues that the stage was being set for changes that would gather pace from 1920 onwards, including Polperro being used as a film set and the steady rise in the tourist trade. Next time we will begin to look at the village's artistic heritage dating from 1920, in the second volume of David's book.



"The Cobbles", the right-most cottage on this postcard

David Tovey's two-volume, 600-page work can be purchased from his website <www.stivesart.info/art-in-polperro>. Copies are available in the village at the Post Office and in our PAF gallery at the village hall.

About the Foundation

The Foundation was set up in 2001 to support and promote local established and aspiring artists and to increase awareness of locally-produced art and the long history of art in Polperro. After 19 years at the Chapel Rock gallery in Foresters Hall overlooking the inner harbour, in 2020 the PAF moved to our present site in the Polperro village hall next door to the Crumplehorn Inn.

In preparing for the 2022 season, as part of our commitment to promoting art within the local community we are delighted to be able to support a programme of art-related classes and trips that will be arranged by the Polperro School over the next few months. We look forward to including the pupils' reports on these activities in future issues of this newsletter.

Our Team

Currently we have eight exhibiting members all of whom live and work locally: **Barbara Ellis**, artist; **Sandy Horton**, glass; **Paul Lightfoot**, photographer, writer, newsletter editor; **Sue Lord**, artist; **Charles Summers**, artist and fan-maker; **Babs Taylor**, artist; **Tracy Watts**, graphic designer and illustrator; and **Lisa Woollett**, author and photographer. **Jennie Hale** and **Rachel Brown** are our guest artists.

Let us know if you would like to join us as an artist, friend or volunteer.

Contact us

As usual the gallery closed after the Christmas and New Year break and we plan to re-open on Saturday 19th February 2022. We are always available by email at <polperroarts@gmail.com> or through our website: <www.polperroarts.org>

